

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

----- 018139

R 291713Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3948

INFO USDEL MBFR VIENNA

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 12392

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, NATO, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET POLICY IN MBFR

REF: A. MOSCOW 11451

B. MOSCOW 0743

1. SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET INTEREST IN AN MBFR AGREEMENT SHOULD FROW IN THE WAKE OF CSCE. SUCH AN AGREE-
MENT WILL HAVE TO FALL WITHIN CERTAIN LARGELY NON-NEGOTIABLE
PARAMETERS, WHICH WE DESCRIBED IN REF B. BUT PUBLIC COMMITMENTS
TO PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE MADE AT THE
HIGHEST LEVEL IN THE WAKE OF THE HELSINKI SUMMIT, AS WELL AS
CONTINUING SOVIET INTEREST IN LIMITING THE BUNDESWEHR AND
REDUCING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE SPENDING IN THE WEST,
INDICATE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE RETURNING TO VIENNA UNDER SOME
PRESSURE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT. ALSO ADDING INCENTIVE TO
SOVIET EFFORTS TO FULLY REGULARIZE RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE
ARE STRAINED SOVIET-CHINESE POLITICAL RELATIONS. WE BELIEVE
THAT WHILE THE SOVIET MILITARY CAN HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO BE
ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MBFR, IT SEES NO THREAT TO ITS OWN
INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS IN AN MBFR AGREEMENT CONFINED TO MODEST
REDUCTIONS WHICH NEED NOT CHANGE FORCE STRUCTURES. WE DO NOT
BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY IN ANY CASE WILL TAKE IT UPON ITSELF
TO CHALLENGE PARTY EVALUATIONS OF THE POLITICAL BENEFITS TO BE
GAINED FROM SUCH AN AGREEMENT. THE SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY
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WAIT FOR US TO TABLE OPTION III BEFORE THEY MAKE ANY FURTHER

MOVES, AND WILL REACT TO THE PROPOSAL CAUTIOUSLY; BUT OUR BEST GUESS WOULD BE THAT THEY NEVERTHELESS WILL REACT WITH SOME MOVE TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF AT LEAST THE PRINCIPLE OF ASYMMETRY IN GROUND FORCE CUTS. WE SUGGEST CONSIDERATION OF TWO MBFR MOVES DESIGNED TO PREEMPT SOVIET SPONSORSHIP OF ROMANIAN AND NEUTRAL SECURITY CONCERNS NOW THAT CSCE IS OVER: A VPWG STUDY OF CONSTRAINTS IN LIGHT OF CMBS, AND SYSTEMATIC BRIEFING OF NEUTRALS ON MBFR DEVELOPMENTS BY AD HOC GROUP IN VIENNA. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH CSCE OVER, ATTENTION IN EUROPE IS TURNING TO MBFR. THESE NEGOTIATIONS ARE COMING TO BE REGARDED -- PERHAPS AS MUCH IN THE EAST AS IN THE WEST -- AS THE NEXT STEP IN BRINGING THE EUROPEAN DETENTE RELATIONSHIP ADUMBRATED IN CSCE BEYOND THE STATE OF ADVANCED INFANCY. SALT II IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS MORE IMPORTANT, BUT PERHAPS FOR THAT VERY REASON THE GENEVA TALKS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE A MOMENTUM OF THEIR OWN WHICH WILL IMPINGE ON THE MORE GENERAL DETENTE RELATIONSHIP ONLY IF THEY SHOULD FAIL. MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT SUCCESS IN SALT II; MBFR IS MUCH LESS OF A SURE THING.

3. WRITING IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR (REF B), WE ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE A STAKE IN A SUCCESSFUL MBFR AGREEMENT. WITHIN CERTAIN NON-NEGOTIABLE PARAMETERS WHICH THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED, AN MBFR AGREEMENT SOULD SERVE A NUMBER OF SOVIET INTERESTS: LIMITING THE BUNDESWEHR; MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM OF THEIR "PEACE PROGRAM"; FURTHER STABILIZING THE SITUATION IN EUROPE IN ORDER TO FREE THEIR HANDS TO DEAL WITH CHINA; AND ENCOURAGING A DECREASE IN DEFENSE SPENDING IN NATO. THE PARAMETERS ARE PROBABLY SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO ALLOW ASYMMETRIC TROOP CUTS, WE WROTE, IF SUCH CUTS ARE BALANCED OUT BY ASYMMETRIC CUTS IN NATO WEAPONS SYSTEMS. WE CONCLUDED THAT NATO AND WARSAW PACT IDEAS ON WHAT SHOULD CONSTITUTE AN AGREEMENT OVERLAPPED SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION TO THE TALKS AN ENTIRELY PLAUSIBLE OUTCOME.

4. THE CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION IN THE INTERVENING EIGHT MONTHS WOULD CAUSE US TO CHANGE ONLY THE NUANCES OF OUR ANALYSIS. SOME OF THE FACTORS WE REFERRED TO HAVE BEEN OVERTAKEN BY OTHER EVENTS; THE EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTY CONFIDENTIAL

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REFERENCE HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE AS SCHEDULED, AND THE FBS ISSUE HAS BEEN SHIFTED TO ANOTHER FORUM, AS WE PROJECTED. BUT WE STILL BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE A STAKE IN MBFR, AND INDEED PROBABLY A LARGER STAKE NOW THAN THEY DID EIGHT MONTHS AGO, BECAUSE OF OTHER NEW FACTORS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION:

--THE COMPLETION OF CSCE. BREZHNEV'S SPEECH IN HELSINKIS, AS WELL AS OTHER OFFICIAL STATEMENTS SINCE THAT TIME, HAVE CONFIRMED

AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL THAT FOR THE SOVIETS THERE WAS A LINK BETWEEN COMPLETION OF CSCE AND MOVEMENT IN MBFR. (REF A REPORTS ON THE INCREASE IN PUBLICLY-EXPRESSED OFFICIAL INTEREST IN MBFR IN THE WAKE OF CSCE.) AS BREZHNEV MADE CLEAR, "SUCCESS" IN CSCE HAS NOW CREATED SOME PRESSURE FOR, PERHAPS EVEN EXPECTATION OF, SUCCESS IN MBFR.

-- HEIGHTENED FRICTION WITH CHINA. POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA ARE INCREASINGLY STRAINED AS A RESULT OF PUBLIC POSTURING AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES MANEUVERING OVER SOUTHEAST ASIA. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF ANY INCREASE IN MILITARY TENSION, THE SOVIETS WOULD CLEARLY LIKE MORE THAN EVER TO HAVE THEIR HANDS FREE TO DEAL WITH CHINA. INCREASING PUBLIC ATTENTION TO A "COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM" FOR ASIA IS PROBABLY A REFLECTION OF THESE NEW STRAINS. (THOUGH THE SOVIETS DO NOT EXPECT TO ACHIEVE SUCH A SYSTEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE, PROPAGANDA FOR SUCH A SYSTEM IS ONE WAY THEY CONDUCT THEIR CAMPAIGN AMONG ASIAN STATES AGAINST CHINA.) SUCH A PROGRAM HAD PROBABLY BEEN PLANNED AS A FOLLOW-UP TO CSCE IN ANY CASE, BUT THE SPEED AND THE INTENSITY WITH WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE KICKED IT OFF SUGGESTS TO US THAT OTHER, MORE URGENT FACTORS ARE ALSO PLAYING SOMEWHAT OF A ROLE.

-- STIFFER ATTITUDES IN THE WEST ON DEFENSE SPENDING. THE INDOCHINA DENOUEMENT, AND PERHAPS EVEN MORE THE IMBROGLIO IN PORTUGAL, HAVE WORKED TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR ADEQUATE DEFENSE BUDGETS IN THE WEST. THE CONCEPT OF A SOVIET OR COMMUNIST THREAT TO WESTERN EUROPE IS AGAIN CONSIDERED WORTHY OF PUBLIC CONCERN. AN MBFR AGREEMENT WOULD WORK AGAINST THIS.

-- SOVIET SET-BACKS. THE DECREASE IN SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST MIGHT CONCEIVABLY MILITATE AGAINST FLEXIBILITY IN MBFR. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT IS IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THE VIENNA TALKS. HOWEVER, A DENOUEMENT IN PORTUGAL NOT FAVORABLE TO THE SOVIETS, ESPECIALLY IF IT INVOLVED ARMED CONFLICT, WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO PROVIDE GRIST FOR THE MILLS OF SOVIET POLICY ADVISERS SKEPTICAL OF THE BENEFITS OF AN MBFR AGREEMENT.

5. HAVING RAISED THE ISSUE OF SOVIET HAWKS, WE PERHAPS SHOULD SAY SOMETHING ABOUT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOVIET MILITARY ON MBFR. WE ASSUME FROM THE OUTSET THAT THEY ARE AT LEAST SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT. HAVING SAID THAT, HOWEVER, TWO RELATED QUESTIONS PROBABLY HAVE MORE BEARING ON HOW MUCH INFLUENCE THEY WILL ACTUALLY EXERT ON THE COURSE OF MBFR NEGOTIATIONS: (1) HOW STRONGLY WOULD AN OTHERWISE PALATABLE MBFR AGREEMENT AFFECT THE INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS OF THE MILITARY; AND (2) ARE PARTY-MILITARY RELATIONS

SUCH AT PRESENT THAT THEY COULD HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE MILITARY
VIEW OF MBFR?

6. IT APPEARS TO US HERE THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MILITARY
AND THE PARTY ARE IN GOOD SHAPE. AN AGREEMENT SEEMS TO HAVE
BEEN REACHED WHICH ALLOWS PARTY DOMINANCE IN STRATEGIC POLICY,
WITH A MINIMUM OF BACK-BITING BY THE MILITARY, AND FAR-REACHING
PARTY INFLUENCE AT THE UNIT LEVEL OVER OPERATIONAL AND TRAINING
DECISIONS. IN RETURN THE MILITARY RECEIVES A LAVISH BUDGET,
THE BEST IN SOVIET TECHNOLOGY, AND PROPAGANDA SUPPORT IN
TRUMPETING THE NEED FOR AN ELABORATE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT
DURING A TIME OF DETENTE.

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EXDIS

7. OF COURSE, ONE CAN STILL ON OCCASION FIND OPINIONS EXPRESSED
IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE PUBLICATIONS WHICH DIFFER FROM THOSE
PUBLISHED IN MAIN POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION OR OTHER PARTY
PUBLICATIONS. THE MILITARY CONTINUES TO RESIST COMPLETE PARTY
DOMINATION OF TRAINING, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON THE PRIMACY OF
IDEOLOGICAL RATHER THAN OPERATIONAL/TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRAMS.
AND THE MILITARY SEEMS TO CONTINUE TO RESENT THE UNDUE SHARE OF
CREDIT THE PARTY RECEIVES IN HISTORIES OF THE WAR. THE PARTY
NEVERTHELESS SEEMS TO BE EASILY HOLDING ITS OWN IN THESE
CONTROVERSIES, AND MILITARY COMPLAINTS SEEM TO BE RATHER MUTED
WHEN COMPARED TO THE ARGUMENTS WHICH RAGED DURING KHRUSHCHEV'S
TIME. GRECHKO'S LINE IN SPEECHES ON THE ISSUES IS FIRMLY IN
SUPPORT OF PARTY INTERESTS, PERHAPS INDICATING THAT GRECHKO'S

COOPTATION INTO THE POLITBURO HAS INCREASED PARTY CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY MORE THAN IT HAS EXTENDED MILITARY INFLUENCE IN PARTY COUNCILS.

8. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE MILITARY IN ALL INSTANCES SUBMITS WITHOUT QUESTION TO THE PARTY. ON QUESTIONS RELATING TO DEFENSE THEY OBVIOUSLY HAVE GREAT WEIGHT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL CHALLENGE THE RIGHT OF THE PARTY TO DETERMINE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL STRATEGY. THE PARTY, FULLY AWARE THAT ITS ARMED FORCES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY TOOL IT HAS, IS NOT GOING TO ACCEPT AN AGREEMENT IN WHICH THE SOVIET UNION RECEIVES LESS THAN IT GIVES IN TERMS OF THE SUM TOTAL OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY
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EFFECTS. BUT IT WILL BE THE PARTY, NOT THE MILITARY, WHICH DECIDES WHAT RELATIVE WEIGHT TO ACCORD TO POLITICAL FACTORS, AND THE MILITARY IS NOT LIKELY TO CHALLENGE IT. FURTHER, AS WE EMPHASIZED IN REF A, IN MBFR WE ARE DISCUSSING REDUCTIONS OF VERY MODEST PROPORTIONS WHICH WILL NOT CHANGE THE OVERALL FORCE STRUCTURE UNLESS PARTICIPANTS WISH TO USE THEM AS THE OCCASION FOR CHANGE. THE PARTY CAN, THEREFORE, ARGUE WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION THAT THE POLITICAL FACTOR IS CLEARLY DOMINANT. THE SOVIET MILITARY OX IS NOT BEING GORED IN MBFR (ALTHOUGH SOME CALVES MAY APPEAR ON THE RAMP IF NEGOTIATIONS ON MUTUAL LIMITS FOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS IN THE NATO GUIDELINES AREA BEGIN IN EARNEST). THERE WILL BE NO REDUCTION IN TOTAL SOVIET FORCES, SIMPLY A SHIFT IN THE LOCATION OF THOSE FAORCES. AND THE PARTY CAN CLEARLY GIVE ASSURANCES TO THE MILITARY THAT IN TIME OF REAL NEED THOSE FORCES CAN BE QUICKLY REINTRODUCED INTO THE AREA. IN SUM, WHILE THE MILITARY CAN HARDLY EXPECT TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MBFR, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE UP IN ARMS ABOUT IT.

9. HOW CAN WE EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO PROCEED WHEN NEGOTIATIONS RECONVENE IN VIENNA? THEY CLEARLY EXPECT US TO TABLE OPTION III, WHICH IS FAMILIAR TO THEM IN VIRTUALLY ALL DETAILS BY NOW, DOWN TO AND INCLUDING THE NAME OF THE PROPOSAL. UNTIL THAT HAPPENS WE DO NOT EXPECT ANY NEW SOVIET MOVES. IF OUR OPTION III PROPOSAL IS NOT READY TO TABLE WHEN THE ROUND BEGINS, WE EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS ON SECONDARY ISSUES. WE WOULD PREDICT, MOREOVER, THAT WHEN OPTION III IS TABLED, THE SOVIET RESPONSE WILL BE A CAUTIOUS ONE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL EITHER POCKET OR BAD-MOUTH THE PROPOSAL IMMEDIATELY. THEY WILL REALIZE THAT IT MAY BE AS MUCH AS THE WEST WILL OFFER, AND, IF THEY ARE GOING TO GET AN AGREEMENT, IT WILL HAVE TO REVOLVE AROUND THAT PROPOSAL. IT THUS BEHOOVES THEM, AT LEAST IN PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS, NOT TO BELITTLE IT TOO MUCH. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY WILL OBVIOUSLY REGARD THE OPTION III WE TABLE AS A NEGOTIATING PROPOSAL AND SEEK TO WHITTLE DOWN THE GUID OF OBLIGATIONS ON THEIR SIDE. THEY MAY BEGIN BY ADMITTING

THE POSSIBILITY OF SLIGHTLY ASYMMETRIC CUTS IN TROOP STRENGTH IN RETURN FOR THE NATO OPTION III CUTS, BUT PROBABLY WILL HAVE TO BE FIRMLY PUSHED DOWN THE ROAD TO SUBSTANTIAL ASYMMETRY.

10. WE ARE, OF COURSE, NOT EQUIPPED TO OFFER ADVICE ON MBFR NEGOTIATING SPECIFICS. HOWEVER, FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT IT
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SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE WEST WILL BE FACING A BARRRAGE OF SOVIET EXHORTATION ON MBFR AS NEGOTIATIONS RESUME. SUCH A BARRAGE WOULD SERVE THREE PLAUSIBLE PURPOSES: (1) TO PUT PRESSURE ON WESTERN NEGOTIATING POSITIONS VIA THE ESTERN PUBLIC; (2) TO KEEP PUBLIC ATTENTION FIRMLY FIXED ON SECURITY ISSUES, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE LESS CONGENIAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, IN THE WAKE OF HELSINKI; AND (3) TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF SPONSORING ROMANIAN AND NEUTRAL SECURITY CONCERNS, NOW THAT THEY CAN NO LONGER BE VENTILATED DIRECTLY IN CSCE. WITH REGARD TO THE LAST POINT, WE WOULD HAVE TWO SUGGESTIONS:

-- A NEW VERIFICATION PANEL WORKING GROUP STUDY OF CONSTRAINTS IN MBFR, IN LIGHT OF THE CBM PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. NOW THAT THE SHADOW O A CSCE MANDATE FOR MBFR NO LONGER HOVERS OVER THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA, WE MIGHT WISH TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO VALIDATE OUR CONSISTENT CLAIM THAT MBFR IS THE PROPER FORUM TO NEGOTIATE CBMS WITH REAL MUSCLE. ROMANIAN AND NEUTRAL MILITARY SECURITY WORRIES TEND TO FOCUS ON CONSTRAINTS-TYPE MEASURES (WHOSE EDGES CUT PRIMARILY AGAINST THE USSR IN THEIR MINDS), AND WE MAY HAVE AN INTEREST IN TAKING THE LEAD IN VOICING SUCH CONCERNS IN MBFR BEFORE THEY DO SO ELSEWHERE.

-- AUTHORIZATION FOR THE AD HOC GROUP IN VIENNA TO INITIATE AND MAINTAIN SYSTEMATIC CONTACTS WITH THE VIENNA EMBASSIES OF CSCE PARTICIPANTS NOT IN MBFR, ON THE MODEL OF PRESENT CONTACTS WITH THE ROMANIANS. THIS STEP, TOO, WOULD SEEM A FARILY BENIGN WAY TO DRAW POISON FROM NEUTRAL DISCONTENT AT EXCLUSION FROM REACTIVATED DISARMAMENT TALKS.

11. WHATEVER THE COMPLEXITIES, HOWEVER, AND DESPITE AN AMPLE DOES OF CAUTION, WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS WILL BE UNDER SOME PRESSURE TO SHOW A MODICUM OF PROGRESS IN THE TALKS BY THE TURN OF THE YEAR OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER. BREZHNEV WILL WANT TO BE ABLE TO PRESENT THE XXV PARTY CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY PROOF THAT HE HAS NOT MISCALCULATED THE WEST'S WILLINGNESS TO AGREE TO ENTER INTO ONE OF THE MOST CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE DETENTE RELATIONSHIP. HE HAS NOW COMMITTED THE PRESTIGE OF SOVIET DIPLOMACY, AND BY INFERENCE, HIS OWN PRESTIGE, TO ACHIEVING PROGRESS IN VIENNA. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT HE WILL ACCEPT AN AGREEMENT WHICH HE FEELS WILL NOT ADEQUATELY BALANCE OUT SOVIET MILITARY AND POLITICAL INTERESTS. BUT IT MAY MEAN THAT
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HE WILL BE SOMEWHAT MORE FLEXIBLE THAN HERETOFORE IN HIS
DEFINITION OF WHAT EXACTLY IS ADEQUATE.

12. (DAL CONCURS WITH THE THRUST OF THE ABOVE, BUT BELIEVES
THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE MILITARY AT PRESENT IS
CONTESTING IN ANY WAY THE LEADING ROLE OF THE PARTY IN
STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS. AS FAR AS CAN BE
DETERMINED, THE MILITARY NOT ONLY ACCEPTS PARTY DOMINATION
BUT IS COMFORTABLE WITH THIS RELATIONSHIP SINCE IT HAS BEEN
EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL TO THEM THROUGH THE YEARS.)

13. DEPT REPEAT AS DESIRED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTE, POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW12392
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750300-0449
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975085/aaaaaeax.tel
Line Count: 349
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 MOSCOW 11451, 75 MOSCOW 743
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <14 JUL 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET POLICY IN MBFR
TAGS: PARM, UR, NATO, MBFR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006